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## Nothing Is Served But Destruction

President Nixon has been waging a bombing war in Vietnam since withdrawing most of our ground troops. Two recent reports from the top U.S. intelligence agencies indicate that the policy is as futile today as it has proved to be in the past.

The gist of assessments from the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency is this: Despite the fury of our bombing attacks, in the face of superior forces and equipment on the other side, Hanoi's soldiers tenaciously fight on. We bomb railroads; they pull out barges, bicycles and backpacks and continue moving men and supplies to the south. We blast holes in fuel pipelines; they turn off the faucet at pumping stations and quickly make repairs.

The intelligence people conclude

that the North can continue fighting "at the present rate" in South Vietnam for the next two years. One official did say that "they are slowly bleeding to death — even if it takes two more years." But even if one accepts that as a debatable goal of U.S. policy in Vietnam, the remark must be classified as a variation on "the light at the end of the tunnel." If we just keep bombing for two more years. . . .

Presumably President Nixon or his top advisers saw these reports. Perhaps in terms of Nixon bombing objectives the reports are now beside the point. In his more recent pronouncements on the war, bombing has become less a means of incapacitating the enemy militarily, more a method of furiously nudging Hanoi to accept the terms America offers

at the Paris peace conference. It takes no intelligence analysis to tell us that bombing is not accomplishing much there, either.

About the only purpose bombing seems to be serving is that of devastating enemy terrain and killing more civilians than ever. The President could call off the attacks or at least curb them substantially without really altering the military situation, if the intelligence reports are reliable, and without jeopardizing the peace talks, which clearly have no way to go but up. He may not soon obtain the "peace with honor" he desires. But it would be an honorable and humane act on his part to lessen the bombing, thus reducing the bloodshed in the war he has not ended, as he promised four years ago he would.